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THE DATE OF *THE OWL AND THE NIGHTINGALE*

In 1176 and 1177 the papal legate Cardinal Vivian bore a commission from Pope Alexander the Third to visit "Ireland, Scotland, Norway, and the other circumjacent islands."¹ He actually did visit Galloway, the Isle of Man, Ireland, and Scotland. But as he did not go to continental Norway it is likely that by the terms of his commission, "Norway and the other circumjacent islands," he was authorized to visit not what is now Norway but those Scandinavianized portions of the British Isles—among them the Isle of Man—which had long been and until 1266 were destined to remain bound by loose political allegiance to the crown of Norway.

Galloway was at this date an almost independent state. William the Lion, King of Scotland, had been since 1174 the vassal of Henry the Second, and Henry had refused to receive Gilbert MacFergus Lord of Galloway as a direct vassal, bidding him rather accept William as his legitimate feudal superior. Gilbert, however, maintained a fierce if desultory warfare against Scotland till the end of his days. Furthermore, Galloway was a Goidelic-speaking territory colonized by the Irish, and it is altogether probable that there was a liberal admixture of Scandinavian blood in the province from the neighboring Hebrides and the coast of Argyle. A stranger might easily, therefore, be in doubt whether Galloway was a part of Ireland, of Scotland, or of British Norway.

Vivian certainly seems to have regarded Galloway as included in his commission. And the author of *The Owl and the Nightingale* clearly regards Galloway as a part of Norway, for in challenging the

¹ "Missus est itaque ad eos Vivianus presbyter cardinalis qui etiam legatiam Hiberniae Scotiae et Norwegiae et aliarum circumjacentium insularum suscepit et circa festum S. Mariae Magdalenae applicuit in Anglia sine regis licentia." See Lawrie, *Annals of the Reigns of Malcolm and William, Kings of Scotland* (Glasgow, 1910), pp. 214-15. Except for this mission, information concerning Vivian is scanty, but I note the following in *Vitae et Gesta Summorum Pontificum Alfonsi Ciaconii*, ed. 1601, p. 476: "Vibianus Thomasius presb. Card. tt. s. Stefani in Coelio monte. Alex. iij, Bullae Montis Regalis an. 1176. Lucij. iij. trium Pontium an. 1183." See also Giles, *The Life and Letters of Thomas à Becket*, Letters XCHII-XCV.

Nightingale to sing in foreign parts the Owl scornfully asks (vss. 905-10, 913-16):

Hwi nultu singe an oþer þeode,
 Ðar hit is muchele more neode?
 Ðu neauer ne singest in Irlonde
 ne þu ne cūest noȝt in Scotlonde.
Hwi nultu fare to Nore-weie?
an singen men of Galaweie?

 Hwi nultu þare preoste singe,
 an teche of þire writelinge,
 an wise heom mid þire steuene
 hu engeles singeð in þe heuene.¹

It is likely then that Vivian visited Galloway under the impression that it was a part of Norway. His arrival there is not mentioned but only his taking ship from Whithern for the Isle of Man, an undoubted part of British Norway, where he was hospitably received. It is also likely that Gilbert MacFergus, who aspired to be a direct vassal of King Henry and to assure his own independence of the hated Scots, had given the Cardinal a hostile reception. But some months later Vivian tried to treat Galloway as a part of Scotland; for he summoned the Bishop of Whithern to a council of the Scottish clergy convened at Holyrood, Edinburgh, on August 1, 1177. The bishop, however, refused to attend, representing that he was a suffragan of the Archbishop of York and therefore not bound to attend a council of the Scottish clergy. And for this disobedience Vivian suspended the bishop from his functions.

In the following year, 1178, Pope Alexander took pains to make himself perfectly clear about Galloway. For he sent out Peter of Saint Agatha with a commission which expressly mentioned Galloway, Scotland, Ireland, and the Isle of Man, but omitted the word "Norway," which seems to have occasioned so much trouble.²

¹ In quoting the text of *The Owl and the Nightingale* I have endeavored to construct from the two manuscripts as printed by Wells a text a trifle nearer to the original than either manuscript.

² "Venit et quidam alius in Anglia [sic] nuncius summi pontificis, qui Petrus de Sancta Agatha vocabatur, cui commissa erat cura summonendi viros ecclesiasticos Scotiae, Galueaiae et insulae de Man, necnon et Hiberniae, tam archiepiscopos quam episcopos et abbates et priores, ut in vi obedientiae convenirent Romae in capite Jejuni ad praedictum concilium" (Benedictus Abbas, I, 210). See Lawrie, *Annals of the Reigns of Malcolm and William*, pp. 222-23.

I have already quoted passages which show that the author of *The Owl and the Nightingale* regarded Galloway as part of Norway, and also that he was especially interested in the clergy of Ireland, Scotland, "Norway," and Galloway. That Nicholas of Guildford, to whom the poem pays a compliment, was concerned with Scotland appears from the Nightingale's praise of him (vss. 1757-58):

An þurh his muþe & þurh his honde
hit is þe betere in to Scot londe.

In responding to the Owl's taunts the Nightingale represents that her singing would be lost on the inhabitants of Ireland, Scotland, and Galloway. Her description of the Acarnanians of King Henry's empire is of historic importance as expressing the sentiments of an English contemporary toward the backward portions of the British Isles. The Nightingale describes these people as irreclaimable wild beasts. But I am particularly concerned with what is almost certainly an allusion to the mission of Cardinal Vivian (vss. 1015-20):

Þeʒ eni god man to hom come,
so wile dude sum from Rome,
for hom to lere gode þewes,
an for to leten hore un-þewes,
he miʒte bet sitte stille,
vor al his wile he sholde spille.¹

The attitude of the Nightingale toward the Irish requires little comment. They were a very backward people, and in the eyes of the Roman church they had long been heretics as well. The contemptuous remark of the Owl (vs. 322),

Þu chaterest so doþ an Irish prest,

evinces the author's preoccupation with the provincial clergy. But in explanation of the animosity of the Nightingale toward the Scots and Galwegians it should be said that apart from the feeling engendered by the contumacy of the Bishop of Whithern, already

¹ So far as I am aware, Professor J. W. H. Atkins, in the *Cambridge History of English Literature*, I, 265, is the only person who has hitherto suggested that this is an allusion to Vivian's mission. But Professor Atkins expresses a doubt whether the allusion is not rather to Cardinal Guala's mission in 1218, which had no reference at all to Ireland, and is not recorded to have occasioned special mention of Galloway or Norway. Furthermore Professor Atkins makes no chronological inferences.

mentioned, England had been frightfully ravaged in 1138, 1173, and 1174 by armies of the Scottish kings David and William, armies in which there are recorded to have been a multitude of the men of Galloway, who especially distinguished themselves by their atrocities. Furthermore, immediately after the invasion of 1174 Gilbert of Galloway, returning to his dominions, murdered his own brother Uhtred and slew or expelled all officers of the King of Scotland, of whom he aspired to be independent.

All told it is highly probable that *The Owl and the Nightingale* was written between Christmas, 1176, when Vivian left Galloway, and September 21, 1178, when Peter of Saint Agatha's commission, mentioning the Isle of Man and Galloway but avoiding the mention of British Norway, had relegated to the past Vivian's contention that Galloway was part of Norway. It is nearly as probable that Nicholas was a member of the escort which King Henry is reported to have given Vivian on his journey to Galloway, the Isle of Man, Ireland, and Scotland.

Evidence is not lacking that even if the *terminus ad quem* 1178 be too early, it cannot be so by more than a dozen years. For the lines (1757-58),

An þurh his muþe & þurh his honde
hit is þe betere in to Scotlonde,

not only show that Nicholas of Guildford had had something to do with Scotland; they also express the complacency with which Englishmen regarded the position of Scotland from 1174 to 1189 when William the Lion was the direct liegeman of Henry the Second, not merely for English fiefs like Huntingdon, Northampton, or Northumberland, but for Scotland itself. It is clear from numerous passages in the chroniclers that the news of the capture of William at Alnwick in 1174 sent a peculiar thrill of joy and exultation through all England. Church-bells were tolled everywhere, and the miraculous intervention of God and Saint Thomas was evident to all believers. From the position of feudal subordination which William shortly afterward accepted he was released by Richard the First in 1189 in return for 10,000 marks of silver. It is most improbable that the Nightingale's proud reference to Scotland was written later than 1189.

Furthermore, in 1185 Gilbert MacFergus of Galloway died. After a few months of dissension he was succeeded by his nephew Roland McUhtred, an enlightened prince who did much to temper the condition of Galloway. It is unlikely that the Nightingale's bitter reference to a barbarous and irreclaimable Galloway was written after the influence of Roland began to be felt.

Nor is this all. For in describing the wild Irish and others the Nightingale says (vss. 1013-14):

he goþ bi tizt mid ruþe velle
riþt suich he comen ut of helle.

That the author introduces here no allusion to Saint Patrick's Purgatory is perhaps due to the fact that he was writing before the first recorded mention of that Purgatory by Jocelin of Furness about 1183, or at least before the popularization of the myth by the monk of Saltrey, who appears to have written before the canonization of Saint Malachi in 1189.¹

I will also observe that the references to excommunication in *The Owl and the Nightingale* are likely to have been prompted by recollection of the suspension of the Bishop of Whithern, or of the excommunications which Becket launched against his enemies from Vézelay in 1166.

My argument thus far is based upon what appear to be historical allusions in the poem. These are best explained by assuming that the poem was written in 1177 or 1178. A few objections to this date may now be considered.

1. First of all, the Nightingale's prayer for the soul of King Henry (vss. 1091-92):

Dat under-wat þe King Henri,
Jesus his soule do merci.

With scarcely a dissenting voice² it has been agreed that this is a prayer for the dead, and that therefore the poem was written

¹ See *L'Espurgatoire Seint Patrice*, ed. Jenkins, pp. 1 ff. Incidentally I may remark that from a remote period certain parts of the British Isles had been regarded as a world of departed spirits. See Skene, *Four Ancient Books of Wales*, I, 201-3; Procopius *De Bello Gothico* iv. 20. 48 sqq. Also and *per contra* the Nightingale's phrase was proverbial. See *Richard Coeur de Lion*, ed. Brunner, vss. 6703-4, where it is said of the Saracens:

"No tungge," he seide, "may hem telle;
I wene þey comen out of helle."

² See footnote on p. xvii of Wells's excellent edition of *The Owl and the Nightingale*; also Breier, *Eule und Nachtigall* (Halle, Niemeyer, 1910), p. 159.

after the death of Henry the Second in 1189. But the reading of the Cotton MS alone should have warned us against this conclusion since the verb *under-wat* has the meaning of a present tense and shows that the scribe understood that Henry was still living when the prayer was offered. Neither is it clear whether the poet meant Henry the Second or his son Henry, who shared the royal title from 1170 till his death on June 11, 1182. Indeed as an exponent of romantic chivalry the younger king might be held a more appropriate subject of the Nightingale's prayers than his practical and unromantic father. Nor do we lack evidence of prayers for the souls of the living during the Middle Ages. Numerous authors conclude their compositions with a prayer either for their own souls or for those of their readers, or by requesting the reader to pray for the author's soul. *Havelok*, *Sawles Ward*, *An Orison of Our Lord*, and the *Poema Morale* are concluded in this manner. Prayers for the soul of the reigning king must have been offered. In the English charters of Henry the First and Henry the Second these monarchs commend the redemption of their souls to Christ.¹ And it was customary for subjects to swear "on the soul of the King" that he would be faithful to a treaty in question.² In fact, the idea that Henry the Second or his son Henry was dead when the Nightingale prayed for his soul is utterly without foundation.³

2. It has been suggested that the *Galaweie* mentioned by the Owl is not Galloway in Scotland but Galway in Ireland. This is exceedingly improbable; for while Galloway figures conspicuously in the history of England during the twelfth century, Galway was so little known to Englishmen of that era that an unexplained reference to the Irish county might easily have proved unintelligible.

3. It may be urged that the word *wile*, "once," "once upon a time," in the line (1016),

so wile dude sum from Rome,

¹ See Hickes, *Thesaurus, Praefatio*, p. xvi. Stubbs in his *Constitutional History* (I, 442, note) refers to this page for an English charter of Stephen which is not there. The charter of Henry the Second is also printed in *Anglia*, VII, 220-21, as edited by Strømman.

² See Robertson, *Scotland under Her Early Kings*, II, 42, 65, 82-83, 113.

³ Because Giraldus Cambrensis in 1210 offered a prayer for the soul of Walter Map, it has been inferred that Map was dead in 1210. Such a conclusion is more favored by the imperfect tense *solebat* than by the actual prayer "cujus animae propitiatur Deus." See Giraldus (Rolls Series), V, 410.

implies that the mission of Vivian had taken place long ago. But the expression (which is very indefinite) may be due to the poet's having had vaguely in mind earlier embassies as well as Vivian's. The invasion of Ireland by King Henry was authorized by a bull of Pope Adrian the Fourth, and may have been regarded as constructively a papal embassy. Or the poet may have remembered the embassy of Cardinal Paparone to Ireland and the Synod of Kells in 1152. Furthermore, even if the poet was thinking only of the legateship of Vivian, the lapse of six months or so may have been regarded as relegating Vivian to a distant past according to the standard of owls and nightingales. This last suggestion is perfectly in accord with the poet's sly humor and powers of characterization.

4. An attempt has been made by Gadow and Felix Liebermann to identify the poet's Nicholas of Guildford with a certain *Nicholaus capellanus archidiaconi*, and with *Nicholaus submonitor capituli de Gudeford*, respectively mentioned in documents of Salisbury, the former in 1209 and the latter in 1220.¹ The identification is by no means unpalatable, even though neither Nicholas is connected with Portesham in Dorset, where *The Owl and the Nightingale* places Nicholas of Guildford.² But even if accepted, the identification only proves that Nicholas must have been sixty years old or upward in 1220 if *The Owl and the Nightingale* was written in 1177. This is no valid ground for abandoning 1177 as the date of composition. The Nightingale's complaint that the services of Nicholas were unrewarded is perhaps more intelligible if Nicholas was a young and ambitious but unimportant member of the escort, though the fact that Vivian left the Scottish church independent of either York or Canterbury at a time when Henry the Second desired to subject Scotland to one of these sees would abundantly account for the failure of the English bishops to recognize any services of Nicholas to Vivian.

The presumption is, then, that *The Owl and the Nightingale* was written in 1177 or 1178. This contention is founded on the historical allusions which the poem appears to contain. The linguistic evidence is far more difficult to discuss. To determine

¹ See Wilhelm Gadow, *Das Mittelenglische Streitgedicht, Eule und Nachtigall* (Berlin, 1910), pp. 12-13.

² Vss. 1752-54.

the date of a Middle English poem by the dialect is sometimes like trying to tell the hour of day in a room where there are twenty clocks, no two of which keep the same time; for dialect depends not only on date but also on locality and on personality. Furthermore, the monuments of this period are seldom autographs, and we are ever at the mercy of a blundering or modernizing scribe. Linguistic evidence being therefore less precise than that derived from historical allusions, I shall content myself with enumerating a few carefully considered points which indicate, I submit, an earlier date for the poem than has hitherto been propounded. They are the following:

1. Eight cases of the dual number of the personal pronoun. The first person occurs in 151, 552, 993, 1689, 1780, 1782, and 1783; the second person *hunke* occurs in 1732.¹

2. The neuter plural *grinew*, 1056, retaining the Anglo-Saxon *-u*.

3. The comparative in *-re*: *mildre*, 1775.

4. The inflected numerals: *anne*, 811, 831; *twere*, *tweire*, *tweyre*, 888, 991, 1396; *beire*, *beyre*, 1584; *twam*, *twom*, 991, 1477.

5. The inflected indefinite article: *ore*, 17, 1754.

6. The inflected definite adjectives: *fulne*, 1196; *godne*, 812; *rihtne*, 1238.

7. The inflected possessives: *mire*, *myre*, 1741; *þire*, 429, 914, 915, 1650, etc.

8. The conjunction *þe*:

(a) meaning "or": 824, 1064, 1362, 1408.

(b) meaning "than": 564.

(c) meaning "that": 941.

¹ The value of the Middle English dual as a criterion of date has not yet been properly recognized. *Havelok* is the only monument containing duals (*wit* [MS *witl*], 1336, and *unke*, 1882) which may confidently be dated later than 1200, and even in *Havelok* the dual is likely to have been taken over from some earlier version of the story. Layamon is of the twelfth century (see p. 256, n. 1) and Orm probably of the first half of that century. There are no duals in *Ancren Riwele*. *Genesis and Exodus* is in a peculiar dialect, resembling that of the *Bestiary* and *The Proverbs of Alfred* (Text II in Morris' *Miscellany*). It is of a Midland type and therefore likely to have simplified its diphthongs and lost its inflections early. Nevertheless it presents the following duals: *wit*, 1775, 2934; *unc*, 1776; *gunkere*, 398; *gunc*, 2830; *?wit* (MS *we it*), 1777; *?get*, 3093. Furthermore, although much more than twice as long as *The Owl and the Nightingale*, *Genesis and Exodus* contains but ninety-eight words of French origin. (From the list given by Fritzsche in *Anglia*, V, 83-84, omit *orgel*, which is probably from the Anglo-Saxon. The French form is written with an *i*, e.g., *orgeil*.) I conclude that *Genesis and Exodus* is probably older than 1250, and possibly earlier than 1200.

9. The hortative particle *ute*, *vte* (A.S. *utan*, *uton*), followed by the infinitive: 1779.¹

10. The formula *Alured King*, 235, for "King Alfred."²

11. The forms *eauar*, "ever," 1474; *oþar*, "other," 479; *andsware*, "answer," 639, 657; *al-swa*, "also," 1663; *alswa*, "just so," 1329, 1373.

The considerations above are of course of unequal weight, but their collective force is, I submit, sufficient to show that *The Owl and the Nightingale* was written earlier than *Ancren Riwle*, the date of which can hardly be later than 1230, and by Einkenel was placed "about 1200."³

Furthermore, the entries of the Peterborough Chronicle from 1135 to 1154 can hardly have been written as late as 1160. It is true they were written in Northamptonshire, where the language was less conservative than in the south of England; but they were also probably written by a monk who was familiar with the earlier entries of the Chronicles and more or less influenced by the earlier language of 1121.⁴ It is therefore curious to find that the entries from 1135 to 1154 show a larger percentage of French words than does *The Owl and the Nightingale*. For the entries from 1135 to 1154 occupy 221 lines in Plummer's edition of the text and contain from twenty to twenty-two French words. *The Owl and the Nightingale* has 1784 lines, the line averaging more than two-fifths as long as a line in Plummer's duodecimo volume. *The Owl and the Nightingale* should therefore contain upward of sixty-four French words in order to equal the entries in this respect. As a matter of fact *The Owl and the Nightingale* contains less than fifty-five French words.⁵ Various English homilies of the twelfth century are also better supplied with

¹ This occurs also in various places in Morris' *Miscellany: The Passion of Our Lord*, 1779; *Sinners Beware!* 67, 225, 229.

² In the Peterborough Chronicle we have *Henri king*, anno. 1132, 1137; *Stephnes kinges*, anno. 1137; *Robbert eorl*, anno. 1140; *Martin abbot*, anno. 1137. In *The Shires and Hundreds of England* (a document datable between the appointment of Jean de Villula as first Bishop of Bath by William the Second, and the cession of Northumberland to Henry the Second by Malcolm the Fourth of Scotland in 1157, Morris' *Miscellany*, pp. 145-46) we have *eadward king*; *myd eadwardes kynges leave*; *Heremon biscop*.

³ See the *Life of Saint Katherine* (E.E.T.S., 1884), p. xviii.

⁴ See Plummer, *Two of the Saxon Chronicles*, II, xxxv.

⁵ See Breier, *Eule und Nachtigall* (Halle, 1910), pp. 151-55. His list includes some doubtful cases.

French words than *The Owl and the Nightingale*. These considerations certainly tend to show that 1177 is by no means too early a date for the English poem.

It is true that Layamon's *Brut*, which was pretty certainly written between 1173 and 1189,¹ is in a dialect far more archaic than *The Owl and the Nightingale*. But this is due to other considerations than chronology. For the *Brut* was written in another locality, and above all by a poet who deliberately archaized his manner. Layamon is not a witty satirist like the author of *The Owl and the Nightingale*. On the contrary he is a poet whose genius made for what is venerable and majestic. His finest passages are of impressive solemnity. His theme was of the remote past. One of his acknowledged sources was the Anglo-Saxon translation of Bede. As he borrowed scarcely anything from its content, it is likely that he was considerably influenced by its language—especially by its inflections and spelling—else he would hardly have mentioned it as one of his sources. Furthermore, the meter of Layamon closely resembles that of certain poems in the Old English Chronicle, especially the poem on William

¹ The evidence as to the date of Layamon's *Brut* has in some points been strangely misinterpreted. Madden was probably right in regarding vss. 2916–21 as an allusion to the destruction of the city of Leicester in the year 1173 (see Madden's *Layamon*, I, xviii), and this remains our best *terminus a quo*. But with the only two remaining historical allusions in the poem I would respectfully suggest that this very able scholar was less fortunate. In his prolog Layamon speaks of having used as one of his sources a book by a French clerk called Wace, and adds (vss. 42–44):

& he hoe ȝef þare æðelen
Ælienor þe wes Henries quene þes heȝes kinges,

"And he [Wace] gave it [the book] to the noble Eleanor who was queen of Henry the high king." Madden supposed that the verb *wes* meant "was then but is no longer," and accordingly inferred that Layamon must have written after the death of Henry the Second in 1189 or even after the death of Eleanor herself in 1204. But if *wes* means anything more than simply "was," it is, I submit, far more natural to suppose that Layamon meant that in 1155, when Wace presented his book to Eleanor, she "was already" or "had become" (the early English preterite has frequently the force of a pluperfect) the Queen of England in 1154, after having successively acquired the titles of Duchess of Aquitaine, Queen of France (which she lost), and Countess of Anjou. The solemn mention of her position and the absence of any mention of the death of Henry the Second is of itself presumptive evidence that Henry was still living when Layamon wrote.

The history of the tribute called "Peter's Pence" outlined in the *Brut* (vss. 31945–80) offers no obstacle to dating the poem as early as 1173, since Henry the Second ordered the payment of "Peter's Pence" to be discontinued in 1164 and again in 1169. Layamon's comment (vss. 31979–80),

drihtē wat hu longe þeo laȝen scullen ilæste,

"the Lord knoweth how long the custom shall last," clearly implies that the payment continued in spite of the edicts which brought it to Layamon's attention. See Madden's *Layamon*, I, xviii–xx.

the Conqueror,¹ and he employs not a few of the epic formulas of Old English poetry. That his archaism is deliberate and artificial, and not the usage of his own day, is shown by the presence of false archaism, as in verses 13846-47:

what cnihtes we beoð & whanene we icumen seoð

Unless *beoð*: *seoð* should be altered to *beon*: *seon* we probably have in *seoð* a form invented by Layamon himself, since *seoð* is correct neither for an indicative nor for an optative. If Ben Jonson had lived in the twelfth century he might have leveled at Layamon the taunt which he actually aimed at Spenser, that "because he affected the ancients he writ no language," a remark which obviously savors of the grammarian who wrote an *English Grammar* rather than of the poet who wrote *The Sad Shepherd*.²

No light has yet been thrown on the date of *The Owl and the Nightingale* by the study of analogs and sources. Analogs are numerous, but their dates and mutual relations are obscure. This conclusion, which I have reached after considerable investigation, is important, if correct, and I would emphasize it.³ From what appear to be historical allusions I have presented an argument of considerable

¹ As was pointed out by Kluge in Paul and Braune, *Beiträge*, IX, 422 ff.

² The subject of Layamon's archaisms has hitherto received little attention from scholars, but an interesting paper, which will doubtless soon be published, on "Epic Formulas in Layamon," was read before the Modern Language Association by Professor Tatlock in December, 1917.

³ I relegate to a note a few points not concerned with the main argument. The antithesis between owl and nightingale was apparently proverbial. Walter Map's *Epistle of Valerius to Rufinus* begins thus:

"Loqui prohibeor et tacere non possum. Grues odi et uocem ulule, bubonem et aues ceteras que lutose hiemis grauitatem luctuose preululant; et tu subsannas uenturi vaticinia dispendii, vera, si perseueras. Ideo loqui prohibeor, veritatis augur, non voluntatis.

"Lu<s>ciniam amo et merulam que leticiam aure lenis concentu placido preloquantur, et potissimum philomenam, que optate tempus iocunditatis tota deliciarum plenitudine annulat, nec fallor."

See Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, ed. James (Oxford, 1914), p. 143 (*Distinccio IV, capitulum iii*). With the foregoing compare especially *The Owl and the Nightingale*, vss. 411-16:

Hule, heo seide, hwi dostu so ?
þu singest a winter wola-wo:
þu singest so doþ hen asnowe,
al þat heo singeþ hit is for wowe.
A wintere þu singest wroþe & ȝomere,
an eure þu art dumb a sumere.

This parallel may some day throw light on the date of the *Epistle of Valerius*. For the present I am concerned only to ask, Is not *The Owl and the Nightingale* related to some proverb resembling the Low German *Wat dem eenen sin Uhl ist dem andern sin Nachtigall* ("One man's owl is another man's nightingale") very much as Mr. Joseph

strength for dating *The Owl and the Nightingale* in 1177 or 1178, or at least not later than 1189. To whatever objections this conclusion may be open, I believe it is not only more precise but also better supported by evidence than any other date that has hitherto been propounded for a document in English between the charter of Henry the Second of 1154-61 and the proclamation of Henry the Third of 1258. If accepted, my conclusion will involve as a corollary considerable revision of the hitherto received chronology of Early Middle English literature.

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Jacobs has declared that animal fables are related to proverbs? See Jacobs, *The Fables of Aesop*, I, 204-5. I owe the Low German proverb to Dr. Richard Goldschmidt, a well-known biologist.

I surmise that Nicholas of Guildford was himself the author of *The Owl and the Nightingale*. It is difficult to see how so excellent a poet should have paid such a tribute to an obscure cleric unless the poet himself had been the cleric, conscious of great literary powers but lacking in the qualities that bring ecclesiastical promotion. Poets not infrequently paid themselves compliments during the Middle Ages, especially in Provence. And even in the nineteenth century Walt Whitman wrote laudatory reviews of his own books. That the author of *The Owl and the Nightingale* can hardly have been John of Guildford is one of a number of good points made by Koch in *Anglia Beiblatt*, XXI, 230-31. In writing this paper I have incurred special obligations to the excellent work on the subject by Wells, Gadow, and Breier.